

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A dried infused food product, comprising:  
an food body;  
an infused inulin content ranging from about 1% to about 35% wherein the inulin has a DP ranging from about 2-9;  
a moisture content ranging from about 5% to about 25%; and,  
an  $A_w$  ranging from about 0.25 to 0.75.
2. The food product of claim 1 wherein the food product is a dried fruit.
3. The food product of claim 2 wherein the food product is whole fruit piece.
4. The food product of claim 3 wherein the whole fruit piece is a member selected from the group consisting of apple, apricots, banana, blueberries, cherries, cranberries, dates, mango, pineapple, raisins, raspberries, strawberries, tomato, and mixtures thereof.
5. The food product of claim 4 wherein the whole fruit piece is a blueberry
6. The food product of claim 4 wherein the whole fruit piece is a raisin.
7. The food product of claim 2 wherein at least a portion of the inulin is oligofructose.
8. The food product of claim 7 additionally comprising about 1% to 30% infused humectant selected from the group consisting of glycerin, poly glycerol ester, and mixtures thereof.
9. The food product of claim 8 wherein the food product is a dried fruit.
10. The food product of claim 8 wherein the starch content is less than 5%.
11. The food product of claim 10 wherein the inulin has a degree of polymerization ranging from about 5 to 9.
12. The food product of claim 11 wherein the dried fruit is a cut fruit piece selected from the group consisting of apples, dates, prunes, apricot, peach, cherries, banana, cranberry, raisins, mango, pineapple and mixtures thereof.
13. The food product of claim 11 additionally comprising about 1% to 15% infused low molecular weight sugar selected from the group consisting of fructose, glucose, dextrose, sucrose, honey and mixtures thereof.
14. The food product of claim 11 wherein the food product is whole fruit piece.

15. The food product of claim 12 wherein the food product has an  $A_w$  ranging from about 0.4 to 0.55.
16. The food product of claim 15 in admixture with a second food.
17. The food product of claim 16 wherein the second food is in particulate form.
18. The food product of claim 16 wherein the admixture is a dry mix for a baked good.
19. The food product of claim 16 wherein the admixture is a cereal bar.
20. The food product of claim 1 wherein the food product is a dried meat product.
21. The food product of claim 20 wherein the dried meat product is a beef product.
22. The food product of claim 22 wherein the dried meat product is a seasoned beef jerkey product.
23. The food product of claim 22 wherein the dried infused food product additionally comprises about 1.5% to 10% salt.
24. The food product of claim 15 having a density ranging from about 0.9 to 1.2 g/cc.
25. The food product of claim 16 wherein the admixture is a dry mix for pancakes and wherein the dried fruit is a whole blueberry.
26. The food product of claim 16 wherein a quantity of the food product is blended with a solid or semi-solid dairy product.
26. The food product of claim 26 wherein the dairy product is ice cream.
27. The food product of claim 26 wherein the dairy product is soft serve frozen dairy product.
28. The food product of claim 17 wherein at least a portion of the RTE cereal is corn (maize) or wheat flakes or puffed oat dough rings.
29. The food product of claim 28 wherein the dried fruit has an  $A_w$  of less than 0.4.
30. The food product of claim 26 wherein the dairy product is yogurt.
31. The food product of claim 1 wherein the food is a garden vegetable.
32. The food product of claim wherein the food is brined meat product.
33. The food product of claim 32 wherein the brined meat product is corn beef or ham.
34. The food product of claim 17 wherein the second food product is a Ready-To-Eat cereal

- 35. The food product of claim 34 comprising about 60% to 99% Ready-To-Eat cereal.
- 36. The food product of claim 35 wherein the second food product is in the form of flakes, puffs, shreds, biscuits and mixtures thereof.
- 37. The food product of claim 16 wherein the second food product is cereal base
- 38. The food product of claim 37 wherein the admixture is a granola bar
- 39. The food product of claim wherein the admixture is a cereal bar.

40. A method for preparing a dried infused food piece, comprising the steps of:  
providing a quantity of un-comminuted food pieces having a moisture content ranging from about 40% to about 95%;  
infusing the food pieces with an inulin wherein the inulin has a degree of polymerization ranging from about 2-9 to form an at least partially inulin infused food piece.
41. The method of claim 40 wherein the infusing step is practiced with an inulin containing syrup.
42. The method of claim 42 wherein the weight ratio of inulin containing syrup to food pieces ranges from about 20:1 to about 1:1.
43. The method of claim 42 wherein at least a portion of the inulin is oligofructose.
44. The method of claim 42 wherein the infusing step includes admixing the inulin containing syrup with the food pieces to form a mixture of food pieces and the inulin containing syrup.
45. The method of claim 44 wherein the infusing step includes the sub-step of holding the mixture of inulin containing syrup and food pieces for sufficient time to allow osmotic equilibrium to form the inulin infused food product and a spent inulin syrup.
46. The method of claim 44 additionally comprising the step of drying the inulin infused food pieces to a finish water activity ranging from about 0.15 to 0.75 to provide a dried inulin bearing food pieces.
47. The method of claim 46 wherein the infusing step includes a sub-step of treating the mixture for microbial control.
48. The method of claim 47 wherein the infusing step includes the sub-step of holding the mixture of inulin containing syrup and food pieces for sufficient time to allow osmotic equilibrium.
49. The method of claim 48 wherein the microbial control treating step comprises heating the mixture to a temperature of  $\geq 40^{\circ}\text{C}$ .
50. The method of claim 49 wherein the inulin syrup comprises
  - (1) fructo oligo sacharides at a concentration of about 30% to 100% (dry weight basis) of the syrup,
  - (2) about 1% to 50% glycerin; and
  - (3) about 10% to 20% moisture

51. The method of claim 50 additionally comprising the step of separating the inulin infused fruit material from the spent inulin syrup.
52. The method of claim 40 wherein at least a portion of the food material is fruit.
53. The method of claim 53 wherein the fruit is selected from the group consisting of apple, apricots, banana, blueberries, cherries, cranberries, dates, mango, pineapple, raisins, raspberries, strawberries, tomato, and mixtures thereof.
54. The method of claim 53 wherein the fruit is selected from the group consisting of apples, blueberries, cherries, cranberries, raisins, strawberries, and mixtures thereof.
55. The method of claim 46 including drying the inulin infused food piece to a finish water activity ranging from about 0.4 to 0.55.
56. The method of claim 43 wherein the infusion solution additionally includes salt.
57. The method of claim at least a portion of the drying step is practiced using vacuum drying.
58. The method of claim 52 additionally comprising the step of:  
admixing a quantity of the dried inulin bearing pieces with a quantity of a second food component to form a blend.
59. The method of claim 58 wherein at least a portion of the second food component is at least one type of ready-to-eat cereal.
60. The method of claim 58 wherein the second food product is in particulate form.
61. The method of claim 60 wherein the second food product is dry having a water activity of about 0.1-0.3.
62. The method of claim 46 wherein at least a portion of the drying step is practiced by osmotic drying.
63. The method of claim 60 wherein at least a portion of the second food ingredient is flour.
64. The method of claim 58 wherein the second food component is the major component of the blend.
65. A method for preparing a high fiber ready-to-eat cereal, comprising the steps of:

admixing a quantity of dried inulin bearing fruit pieces whereby the fruit pieces have a high fiber content with a quantity of a ready-to-eat cereal base to provide a inulin bearing fruit and cereal blend.

66. The method of claim 65 additionally comprising the step of:  
admixing a quantity of dried non-inulin bearing fruit pieces with the inulin bearing fruit and blend.
67. The method of claim 65 wherein the quantity of dried inulin bearing fruit pieces includes a fruit selected from the group consisting of apple, apricots, banana, blueberries, cherries, cranberries, dates, mango, pineapple, raisins, raspberries, strawberries, tomato, and mixtures thereof.
68. The method of claim 65 wherein at least a portion of the cereal base quantity is cereal base pieces fortified with inulin.
69. The method of claim 68 wherein the cereal base pieces fortified with inulin include at least a portion of the inulin in the form of a topical coating.
70. The method of claim 65 additionally comprising the step of:  
forming the inulin bearing fruit and cereal blend into the form of a cereal or granola bar.
71. The method of claim 65 wherein the cereal base pieces are substantially free of added inulin.
72. The method of claim 65 wherein at least a portion of the cereal base pieces are puffed.
73. A high fiber ready-to-eat cereal food product, comprising:  
a quantity of ready-to-eat cereal base pieces; and  
a quantity of inulin infused dried fruit pieces admixed with the cereal base pieces.
74. The food product of claim 74 wherein at least a portion of the cereal pieces are fortified with inulin.
75. The food product of claim 73 wherein at least a portion of the cereal pieces are free of added inulin.
76. The food product of claim 75 wherein at least a portion of the cereal pieces are puffed.
77. The food product of claim 73 in the form of a loose free flowing admixture.
78. The food product of claim 73 having a water activity of about 0.1 to about 0.3.

79. The food product of claim 73 wherein at least a portion of the inulin infused dried fruit pieces are vacuum dried.
80. The food product of claim 73 wherein the cereal base pieces are free of added inulin.
81. The food product of claim 73 wherein at least a portion of the cereal base is calcium fortified.